coverage under wheat in 2004-05 is comparable to that in 2003-04. While in case of rice, the area sown in rabi 2004-05 is 7.5% more than the corresponding area in 2003-04, the area under coarse cereals is 9.5% more during the same period. In case of oilseeds to the area sown in rabi 2004-05 is 8.3% more than the corresponding area in 2003-04. The hailstorms were localized and, as such, would not have any severe impact on the total production of rabi crops. According to the assessment made on 14th March 2005, the area under rabi crops of 2004-05 season is 609.8 lakh hectares as compared to 595.9 lakh hectares as per the corresponding assessment made in the previous year.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Decreasing agricultural growth rate

†1865. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that agricultural growth rate has decreased in the country during the last nine years;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the details of the measures being taken by Government to increase the agricultural growth rate?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA) : (a) The agricultural growth rate in the country has not shown any consistent trend during the last nine years. The details of growth rate of GDP in agriculture including allied sectors are given in the Statement. (*See* below)

(b) Since about 60% of the net sown area is rain-fed, agricultural production is heavily influenced by rainfall. During the last nine years, the growth rate in agriculture was negative in four years, namely, 1995-96 (-0.9)%, 1997-98 (-2.4%), 2000-01 (-0.1%) and 2002-03 (-7.0%). The main reason for the negative growth rate in 1995-96 was the significant decline in the production of both kharif and rabi foodgrains, whereas in 1997-98 and in 2000-01 the main reasons was the significant decline in the production of rabi foodgrains and oilseeds. The year 2002-03 witnessed a severe

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

drought that affected several States in the country, and was responsible for the sharp decline in agricultural production. The low percentage of area under irrigation in respect of major crops, particularly oilseeds (23.0 per cent) and pulses (about 13 per cent) in the country as a whole and the wide inter-State/regional differentials in irrigated area have contributed to the negative agricultural growth in the years referred to above.

(c) With a view to increasing agricultural production, the Government have identified thrust areas for focused and priority attention, which include agricultural credit, irrigation, horticulture, and marketing reforms. The Union Budget for 2005-06 has underscored the importance of efforts aimed at turning the focus of commercial banks, regional rural banks and cooperative banks towards providing credit, especially production credit, to farm households. The other areas highlighted in the Budget include micro irrigation technology comprising drip and sprinkler irrigation, National horticulture Mission with focus backward and forward linkages, and development/strengthening of agricultural marketing infrastructure, grading and standardization.

Statement

Trends in GDP in agriculture including allied sectors during last nine years

Year	GDP in agriculture including allied sectors (at 1993-94 prices)	
	(in Crores)	Growth rate
1995-96	251892	-0.9
1996-97	276091	9.6
1997-98	269383	-2.4
1998-99	286094	6.2
1999-00	286983	0.3
2000-01	286666	-0.1
2001-02	304666	6.3
2002-03	283393	-7.0
2003-04	310611	9.6
2004-05	313915	1.1